

THE SONNET FORM

The sonnet is a lyrical form of poetry and therefore it speaks about intimate feelings, problems and doubts. In Europe Francesco Petrarca first used it in Italy. Petrarch's sonnet became the model for all future sonneteers. As the word shows the sonnet heavily relied on sound devices. Therefore, in the analysis of a sonnet it is important to consider the level of sound. Together with the other levels of connotation, it largely contributes to meaning. The sonnet form is organised/arranged into fourteens lines.

The English sonnet is the result of the gradual transformation from the Petrarchan model to the English sonnet, which is generally called either the Shakespearian sonnet or the Elizabethan sonnet because it developed during the Elizabethan Age.

The best-known Italian sonneteers were Dante and Petrarch. Of the two Petrarch proved most influential on the sonnet history. The privileged theme of the sonnet is secular love. The first English sonneteer, Thomas Wyatt learned of the sonnet form during his journeys in Spain and in Italy.

GRADUAL TRANSFORMATION OF THE ENGLISH SONNET

Thomas Wyatt who lived on the first half of the 16th century followed the Petrarchan model mainly translating Petrarch sonnets into English but soon poets realised that the English language was not suitable to the Italian model because of the different rhythm in the two languages. Indeed, while the rhythm of the Italian language is based on the number of syllables, English rhythm is based on stresses. This made the transformation from Italian into English very difficult and Petrarchan structure did not prove appropriate/suitable to the English language. Therefore, Mr Henry Howard Earl of Surrey decided to transform and modify the structure of the sonnet. The Elizabethan structure of the sonnet was born this way. Mr Surrey transformed the Petrarchan model into a structure arranged/organised into three quatrains and a rhyming couple. Most of the times sonneteers belong to the court and they adopted the contours love code which deals and is addressed to an idealised kind of woman.